(b) to (d) A survey for gauge conversion of Dhaulpur-Sirmuttra with extension upto Gangapur City was completed in 1997-98. As per survey report, the cost of construction of 144 kms. long line was assessed at Rs. 170 crore with a rate of return as (-) 1.87%. Due to unremunerative nature of the project, it was not considered feasible to take up the work. An updating survey has been included in the Budget 2004-05. The survey is likely to be completed during 2005-06.

Special train for Chhatt Pooja

1187. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for not providing the special trains on the occasion of Chhatt Pooja in Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh;

(b) the total number of such trains made available at Delhi/New Delhi and other important railway stations;

(c) the expected number of devotees who were disappointed as a result thereof; and

(d) the decision taken by Government to fulfil such assurance in future in favour of devotees?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) to (d) To cater to the needs of the passengers especially those of Bihar and Eastern Uttar Pradesh, on the occasion of Chhatt pooja, Indian Railways operated 150 special trains. Of these 120 trains were operated from Delhi/New Delhi station for various destinations including Patna, Howrah, Darbhanga, Allahbad, Faizabad, Lucknow, Rai Bareily etc. Indian Railways run special trains during festivals (like Durga Puja, Chhatt, Diwali etc.) and other peak seasons to clear extra rush of passengers. This is an annual feature. No separate statistics is maintained for those passengers, both in reserved and unreserved segments, who could not secure accommodation in trains.

Angul-Sukinda Railway line

1188. SHRI PYARIMOHAN MOHAPATRA: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the reasons for which a paltry sum of Rs. 10 lakh has been allocated in the current year for the proposed railway line from Angul to Sukinda

Road *via* Dubri, which is extremely important for hauling coal to a number of steel projects coming up in Dubri region; and

(b) whether Government would consider allocating at least Rs. 35 crores for the purpose since this paltry amount is not adequate to start the infrastructure for land acquisition, much less the cost of land acquisition itself?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) and (b) Angul-Sukinda new line project was included in Budget 1998-99, keeping in view the traffic transportation requirement of a number of steel plants projected to be set up in the nearby areas. The work of construction of this new line was to be progressed, matching with the progress of development of these steel plants. However, as it was observed afterwards that the steel plants were not to materialize as early as anticipated, a traffic re-appraisal survey was carried out during 2001-02 for reviewing the need of this new line. As per the findings of the survey report, this new line project was assigned a low priority from operational point of view as well as for allocation of funds. So far, Final Location Survey and soil exploration along the alignment have been completed. However, in view of upcoming plants of M/s POSCO and other industrial houses in the State of Orissa, a bankability study of Angul-Sukinda new line project has recently been taken up.

Introduction of direct train between Bangalore-Thiruvananthapuram

1189. SHRI K.B. KRISHNA MURTHY: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the Thiruvananthapuram bound passengers have to rely on the busy Kanyakumari Express which is jampacked with Coimbatore passengers;

(b) whether there is any demand to introduce direct train between Bangalore and Thiruvananthapuram; and

(c) whether Government would take steps to introduce direct train between Bangalore-Thiruvananthapuram to facilitate devotees to visit Guruvayoor and Sabarimala temples?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Two pairs of express trains are adequately catering to the needs of passengers of Bangalore-Trivandrum sector.